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THE
CAMBRO-BRITON.

DECEMBER, 1819.

NULLI QUIDEM MIHI SATIS ERUDITI VIDENTUR, QUIBUS
NOSTRA IGNOTA SUNT. *CICERO de Legibus.*

THE TRIADS.—No. IV.



THE Triads, which are selected for this Number, are of a more miscellaneous description than those, that have preceded them. The first, that follows, may be styled a Constitutional Triad, while the five others seem to unite a mixture of history and mythology. And of these the last two contain, as will be seen, that traditionary reference to the Deluge, which is undoubtedly the most extraordinary of all the ancient memorials, preserved by the Cymry. An allusion to this remarkable tradition was made in the First Number; and its very interesting character requires here a few preliminary observations of a more general nature than those, which may be submitted in the sequel, to explain its peculiar connection with this country.

In the whole history of the world the most momentous event is unquestionably the Deluge. Nor is there any other, that can bear the most distant comparison with this in the tremendous impression it must have left on the memory of mankind for many subsequent ages. Hence we find the early annals of all ancient countries more or less impregnated with the recollections of this dreadful calamity. In some the account preserved corresponds, in a singular manner, with that of the sacred volume*: in some again fable has evidently been engrafted upon the original history; while in others the genuine substance is scarcely discern-

* This is particularly the case with the history of this event as given by Lucian, (*De Dea Syria*, vol. ii. p. 882), wherein Noah is described as Ducalion, and the scene of the Deluge laid at Hierapolis, in Syria. Diodorus Siculus likewise observes, (*Lib. i. p. 10*), that “in the Deluge, which happened in the time of Deucalion, almost all flesh died,” which accords exactly with the expression used, on the same occasion, in *Genesis*, c. vii.

ible through the cloud of mythological attributes, with which it has been invested. Yet all have retained one common and remarkable characteristic, in appropriating this great event, as they do, to those particular nations, in which this tradition has been found to exist. Thus we have the inundation of Attica, in the reign of Ogyges,—that of Samothrace, before the age of the Argonauts*,—and that of Egypt, during the Trojan war: while the people of Thessaly, Phocis, Syria, Epirus, and Sicily have alike laid claim to the great flood of Deucalion, the Noah of the Pagan world, and have, each of them, localised the occurrence to some spot in their respective countries†. The Hindus too have preserved, in their singular mythology, a similar vestige of this general tradition, “which,” to borrow the language of the late Mr. Roberts‡, “every nation, that has “ancient records, has retained and applied to its earliest abode “after the dispersion, when the memorial of that event was “confounded with other emigrations.”

It can not therefore be considered extraordinary, that the Cymry, a people confessedly of the most ancient origin, should likewise have treasured some account of that grand catastrophe, or that, following the example of other nations, they should have confined its operation to that spot, where, after their departure from the East, they made their first settled abode. Accordingly we have the “bursting of the lake of floods” numbered as one of the “three awful events of the Isle of Britain,” and the “ship of Nevydd Nav Neivion,” which conveyed the male and female of all animals upon that disastrous occasion, reckoned as one of its three greatest achievements. And the very oxen of Hu the Mighty, and the other animals, introduced into the narrative, accord, in so curious a manner, with the fabulous circumstances appropriated to the Deluge in other countries, that they tend strongly to confirm the claim of the Triads, in this

* This deluge is said to have been occasioned by the overflow of the Euxine, which the ancients considered merely as a large lake. Samothrace was an island in the *Ægean Sea*, the inhabitants of which were particularly superstitious, and supposed all mysteries to take their origin there.

† Xenophon enumerates five inundations in different countries, all apparently so many variations of the genuine account. And Strabo notices the tradition of such an event having caused the first emigration from Tauric Chersonese.

‡ Early History of the Cymry, p. 41.

instance, to the genuineness and antiquity of their memorials. "These," Mr. Davies very justly observes with reference to this subject *, "are evident traditions of the Deluge; and their locality, as well as other peculiarities, furnishes sufficient proof, that they must have been ancient national traditions. Such memorials as these can not be supposed to have originated in a perversion of the sacred records during any age subsequent to the introduction of Christianity. The contrary appears from their whimsical discrepancy with historical fact." And "this account," he adds with the same judgment, "has no appearance of being drawn from the record of Moses: it is a mere mutilated tradition, such as was common to most heathen nations."

In contemplating this interesting relic of the primitive lore of the Cymry, we are naturally led to regard it as adding one more to the numerous testimonies, previously furnished, to the truth of the Mosaic History. But indeed, with respect to the important fact of the Deluge, it must be the very infatuation of scepticism to question the miracle, when not only the history and mythology of the Pagans, but the very phenomena of the earth, as they exist at this day, concur in its vindication. However, it can not but be a gratifying proof of the authenticity of the Welsh records, as well as of the antiquity of their origin, to find them confirmed in this singular instance, as they are in so many others, by those concurrent testimonies, which the world has ever considered as unimpeachable. And it may be hoped, that the time will yet arrive, when the antiquary or historian, of whatever country, in his search after truth through the darkness of past ages, shall not consider his task complete until he has fully explored the venerable remains of our national literature.

* * *

TRIADS OF THE ISLE OF BRITAIN †.

xiv. The three Pillars of the Commonwealth of the Isle of Britain. The jury of a country, the kingly office, and the function of a judge.

[A singular coincidence with some of the fundamental princi-

* Mythology and Rites of the Druids, p. 95—6.

† The originals of these Triads may be found as follows:—the *first*, Arch. of Wales, vol. ii. p. 57. Tr. 3; the next *four*, Ib. p. 59. Tr. 10 to 13 inclusive; the *last*, Ib. p. 71. Tr. 97.

ples of the English Constitution is observable in this Triad. And, it is not too much to presume, that, as Alfred, in laying the ground-work of that great political edifice, employed, amongst his counsellors, one or two learned Welshmen, and particularly the celebrated Aserius Menevensis, he may have borrowed many valuable suggestions from the ancient institutions of the Cymry.—*Rhaith Gwlád*, translated above “the jury of the country,” is explained in the laws of Hywel Dda to mean “the oath of fifty men from amongst those who hold land under the king.”]

xv. The three Losses, by Disappearance, of the Isle of Britain. Gavran, son of Aeddan, with his men, who went to sea in search of the Green Islands of the Floods, and nothing more was heard of them. Second, Merddin, the Bard of Ambrosius, with his nine scientific Bards, who went to sea in the house of glass, and there have been no tidings whither they went. Third, Madawg, son of Owain Gwynedd, who, accompanied by three hundred men, went to sea in ten ships, and it is not known to what place they went.

[Gavran, here mentioned, was a distinguished chieftain during the close of the fifteenth century. He is described in another Triad as one of the three faithful tribes of Britain. The Green Islands of the Floods, in the original *Gwerddonau Llŷon*, have been supposed to mean the Canaries, or the Cape Verde Islands.—Merddin was a cotemporary of Gavran: he is farther commemorated in the Triads as one of the three Christian Bards of the Isle of Britain. In what this singular account of his “disappearance” took its rise it would be difficult now to discover. But similar legends are common to other countries. Nennius, in his “*Historia Brittonum*,” makes mention of a Tower of Glass, which appeared, in the middle of the sea, to some Spanish soldiers. And in a Spanish Romance of “Alexander,” written in the thirteenth century, is a long account of the hero’s descent into the sea in a House of Glass. The same story is also to be found in a German Romance about the year 1100. And in the continuation of the “*Orlando Furioso*,” some of the spirits, summoned to Demagorgon’s Council, are described as sailing through the air in Ships of Glass, “*gran’ navi di vetro*.” All these extraordinary fictions were, most probably, founded in one common tradition, of which the reason is now lost. Both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Davies conceive Merddin’s House of Glass to signify a sacred vessel emblematic of the Ark; and the

latter farther considers it to be only a symbol of initiation into the Druidical Mysteries*.—With respect to Madawg's emigration, the principal authorities, that confirm this account, were noticed in the Second Number of the CAMBRO-BRITON. He was a younger son of Owain Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, and left his country in consequence of the contest for the succession, which took place amongst his brothers upon Owain's death. His first emigration is said to have taken place in 1170, and his final departure or "disappearance," as it is above called, about two years afterwards. There are strong grounds for believing, that the descendants of this prince and his followers are at this day in existence in the remote wilds of the North American Continent. And it may be interesting to add, that a young man, a native of Wales, is at present endeavouring to explore the presumed settlement of this colony, with every reasonable prospect of succeeding in the object of his spirited enterprise, so as, in one way or other, to set this long controverted question at rest.]

xvi. The three Oppressions that fell on the Isle of Britain, and came afterwards to an end. First, the oppression of the Horse of Malaen, which is called the oppression of May-day; and the oppression of the Dragon of Britain; and the oppression of the Half-apparent Man. That is, the first was transmarine; the second from the frenzy of a country and nation under the pressure of the violence and lawlessness of princes, and which Dynwal Moelmud extinguished, by forming an equitable system of mutual obligation between society and society, between prince and prince, and between country and country. The third was in the time of Beli, the son of Manogan, and which was a treasonable conspiracy, and he extinguished it.

[The circumstances, recorded in this Triad, are so enveloped in mystery, as scarcely to afford a chance of any rational interpretation. The original names are *March Malaen*, *Draig Prydain*, and *Gwr Lledrithiawg*. With respect to the first it may be noticed, that it is still a proverbial expression, in reference to what has been squandered or thrown away, to say, "it has gone on the horse of Malaen." Yet, if this personage be the same with Melen, or Malen, recorded in another Triad † as one of the three recognised dæmons of the Isle of Britain, it may

* See Mr. Roberts's "Cambrian Popular Antiquities," p. 78; and Mr. Davies's "Mythology and Rites of the Druids," pp. 211, 270, 277, and 522.

† Arch. of Wales, vol. ii. pp. 16, 17, and 71.

correspond with the Bellona of the ancient Mythology, with which the name seems to bear some affinity.—*Draig Prydain* may also be rendered the Prince or Generalissimo of Britain.—*Lledrithiawg*, translated “Half-apparent Man,” implies strictly one, who has the power to appear or disappear at will. The Triads commemorate three persons, as having been possessed of this illusive faculty.]

xvii. The three Dreadful Pestilences of the Isle of Britain. First, the pestilence from the carcases of the Gwyddelians, who were slain in Manuba, after they had oppressed the country of Gwynedd for twenty-nine years. Second, the pestilence of the Yellow Plague of Rhos, and which originated from the carcases of the slain; and whoever went within reach of the effluvia fell dead immediately. And the third was the pestilence of the Bloody Sweat, in consequence of the corn having been injured by wet weather, in the time of the oppression of the Normans, under William the Bastard.

[The Gwyddelian or Irish Invasion, here alluded to, is recorded in Triad x, translated in the Second Number of the CAMBRO-BRITON.—The Yellow Plague of Rhos, which the old poets personify as a yellow serpent, happened during the reign of Maelgwn Gwynedd, about the middle of the sixth century, in the district, which occupies the sea-coast between Conwy and the Vale of Clwyd.—The event, last recorded, requires no explanation.]

xviii. The three Awful Events of the Isle of Britain. First, the rupture of the Lake of Floods, and the going of an inundation over the face of all the lands, so that all the people were drowned, except Dwyvan and Dwyvach, who escaped in a bare ship, and from them the Isle of Britain was repopled. The second was the trembling of the Torrent Fire, when the earth was rent unto the abyss, and the greatest part of all life was destroyed. The third was the Hot Summer, when the trees and plants took fire with the vehemency of the heat of the sun, so that many men and animals, and species of birds, and vermin, and plants were irretrievably lost.

[On account of the very interesting nature of this and the following Triad, the strictest regard has been observed, in the translation, to the peculiar phraseology of the originals. The traditional record, which they contain, possesses intrinsic evidence of its high antiquity; and a part of it furnishes, as has been premised, an unquestionable memorial of the Deluge, and that so

singularly dissimilar from the scriptural history, as wholly to preclude all suspicion of being founded upon it.—*Llyn Llion*, translated the Lake of Floods, means, in its more extensive sense, an inexhaustible aggregate of waters: and the old poets have accordingly applied it to the Deluge.—Dwyvan and Dwyvach, the names of the two persons, who survived this catastrophe, signify literally the divine male agent, and the divine female agent, epithets that must be allowed to be singularly applicable to the renovators of the human species, to those, whose important function it was

populos reparare paternis

Artibus, atque animas formatæ infundere terræ*.

Dwyvan may also be synonymous with the Welsh names Dylan and Dyglan, which strongly resemble Deucalion.—With respect to the two calamities by fire here recorded, they must have happened in very early ages; the former apparently owing to a volcanic eruption, and the other to the præternatural heat of the sun. The well-known fable of Phaëton had probably a metaphorical allusion to the latter of these occurrences: and Hesiod's sublime description of the conflagration of the earth may likewise have owed its birth to some such catastrophe †.]

XIX. The three Primary Great Achievements of the Isle of Britain. The ship of *Nevydd Nav Neivion*, which carried in it the male and female of all living, when the Lake of Floods was broken: the prominent oxen of Hu the Mighty drawing the crocodile of the lake to land, and the lake broke out no more; and the stones of Gwyddon Ganhebon, whereon might be read all the arts and sciences of the world.

[The names, that occur in this Triad, are very remarkable. *Nevydd Nav Neivion* plainly designates Noah. The words, taken abstractedly, imply Floater Float of Floats, which is synonymous with Neptune Lord of Lords. Sir William Jones, in his Hymn to Nariana, has the same idea. *Nav* is still a common word for Lord, in which sense it occurs in the metrical Psalms: and *Neivion*, its regular plural, is also employed in ancient compositions to denote the Creator, although it occasionally seems to apply to Neptune. Thus an old poet has the following couplet:

“ Y nofiad â wnaeth Neifion

“ O Droia fawr draw i Fôn.”

* Ovid. Metam. Lib. i. l. 963.

† See his Theogonia, l. 689 to 704.

The swimming, that Neivion performed
From great Troy yonder to Mona.

The similarity between the names of Nav and Noah, and more particularly Naus, one of the Patriarch's appellations in the East, deserves also to be here noticed. The Ship of Nevydd Nav Neivion, therefore, can only mean the ark, which is accordingly numbered as one of the three chief works of the Isle of Britain, upon the same principle that the Deluge is described as one of its three awful events.—The drawing of the crocodile, or whatever be the animal, which the Triad calls *avanc* *, out of the lake has, of course, a reference to the preceding achievement. A similar exploit is recorded in the Hindu Mythology, in which Vishnou is celebrated for destroying the monster, that had occasioned the Deluge, and recovering the earth and the *veds*. It is a singular fact too, that the hippopotamus and crocodile were equally symbols of the Deluge amongst the Egyptians, and were both employed, in common with the wolf, as emblems of Typhon, whom they regarded as the cause of every evil, and consequently of the general inundation †. Some of our ancient bards, among whom are Gwynvardd Brycheiniog and Iolo Goch, make allusion to Hu and his oxen: and the tradition is still prevalent in many parts of Wales, the drawing of the *avanc* out of the water being appropriated to different lakes. Amongst these are one in Caernarvonshire, and another on the Hiraethog Mountain, near Denbigh, called *Llyn dau Ychain*, or the Pool of the two Oxen. At *Llan Dewi Brevi*, or St. David's of the Lowing, in Cardiganshire, they formerly shewed, as a relic, a large horn, which, they pretended, belonged to one of Hu's oxen; and there is still extant a piece of music, imitating the lowing of oxen and the rattling of their chains in drawing the *aranc* out of the water. In the Mabinogion, or Romantic Tales, one of the achievements of Paredur is the slaying of the *addanc y llyn*, or crocodile of the lake, at the Hill of Lamentation. And a poet of the fifteenth century, in soliciting a suit of armour from his patron, compares the workmanship to the "wonderful scales on the fore legs" of the *avanc*. Many other particulars might be enumerated, all

* According to the Welsh Laws this animal was at one time common in Wales; and Giraldus Cambrensis speaks of it as being found in his time in the river Teifi. It has also been called *addanc* and *llostlydan*, which latter seems to mean the beaver, an animal, that is said to have been seen in Nant Ffrancon, in Caernarvonshire, at no very remote period. *Addanc* is merely *avanc*, written according to the Dimetian dialect.

† See Plutarch's "*Isiris and Osiris*," and Diodorus Siculus, Lib. i.

tending to confirm the extraordinary tradition preserved in the Triad, the precise reason of which, however, must still be considered inexplicable. It is somewhat remarkable, that the Arkite Divinity, Dionusus, another name for Noah, was represented by some of his votaries in the shape of a bull: and in the Orphic Hymns he is called *ταυρογενής* and *ταυρομεταστροφής*. His inseparable companions too, the Centauri, are described as horned; and certain ships of old were called *βουκενταυροι*, whence the Venetians took the name of their Bucentaur. The Egyptians too, it may be added, thought the horns of a young ox or bull bore a resemblance with a *lunette*, which was, with them, an emblem of the ark. From all this it may reasonably be inferred, that bulls or oxen had, in most ancient countries, some share in the fabulous circumstances ascribed to the Deluge*. The names, given to the oxen of Hu, are *Ninis* and *Peibio*.—With respect to Hu himself, it would be impossible here to do adequate justice to the various particulars recorded of him. But an opportunity will soon be selected for entering into a separate and full investigation of this remarkable character.—The stones or tablets of Gwyddon Ganhebon seem to correspond with the inscribed pillars of Seth or Hermes; or they may have a reference to the hieroglyphical or Runic inscriptions, which have been found in various countries, both on artificial obelisks and natural rocks. But, whether historical or fabulous, the tradition, here preserved, is well worthy of a more minute examination. Gwyddon Ganhebon is also commemorated in the Triads as having been “the first man in the world who composed poetry.”]

THE WISDOM OF CATWG.

APHORISMS†.

The strength of an infant is his innocence :
 The strength of a boy is his learning :
 The strength of a girl is her beauty :
 The strength of the prudent is his silence :
 The strength of the wise is his reason :
 The strength of a teacher is his method :

* Many interesting particulars, relating to this inquiry, may be found in the 2d volume of Bryant's learned “Analysis of Ancient Mythology.”

† Arch. of Wales, vol. iii. p. 12—13.